

CORRESPONDENCE

A Problem in Ethics

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—The following report from the *Evening Standard* of Tuesday, April 28th, may interest you :

"BABY'S 100 TO 1 CHANCE OF LIVING :

"SAVED BY NURSE

"High Wycombe Borough Council have sent a letter of thanks to Nurse Hudson for her 'courage and self-sacrifice' in taking 'a hundred to one chance' of saving a baby's life.

"Dr. W. Brodie Moore, the Council's Medical Officer, reported that the baby had been born into a very poor home and was suffering from congenital heart disease, collapse of the left lung, mirasmus, and a split palate.

"The child was considered to have a hundred to one chance of living. Its life was saved by Nurse Hudson, who tended it personally for two months, and offered to care for it, free of charge, for another month, to make sure."

What can one do to divert altruism into wiser channels and to biologically more desirable ends?

RUBY LOCKIE.

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Mr. Huxley's Galton Lecture

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—In his lecture published in the *EUGENICS REVIEW* for April (p. 17), Mr. Julian Huxley states that I have made a "grave error" in asserting that "the major races (colour varieties) of man should be regarded as true species." In his recent book, *We Europeans* (with Dr. A. C. Haddon) he endeavours to show that even the conception of geographical races is inapplicable to man. This propagandist closing of the eyes to obvious facts is not likely to advance our knowledge of man, nor can racial problems be solved by assuming that racial differences do not exist.

In support of his thesis, Mr. Huxley falls back upon "mutual infertility" as a criterion of species, although it is well known that this criterion has long since broken down completely both in plants and animals. If it applied, the whole of the Bovidae, for instance, including cattle, zebu, bisons, yaks, etc., would belong to one species!

In the Zoological Gardens, over which Mr. Huxley presides as Secretary, one may see exhibited two cages of mangabey monkeys from West Africa, under the specific names *Cercocebus fuliginosus* and *C. aethiopicus*. They appear to be in fact only geographical races or colour varieties of one species, but their differences are clearly much less marked than the differences say between a negro and an American Indian.

This is not, however, the place to discuss the

subject further. I will only point out here that the anthropological convention of regarding all living races of man as belonging to one species, *Homo sapiens*, is a survival from an earlier period when species were viewed less critically than now. If one is to take an unbiased view, there are strong taxonomic and genetical grounds for recognizing several species of man, if we apply the same criteria as are used to distinguish species of the higher mammals, to which man is most nearly related.

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Mr. Julian Huxley writes: It is impossible to answer Professor Gates's letter fully in these columns. There are, however, a few points which I may make. The case of the mangabeys is a matter for the systematists. If they are only colour-phases, a mistake has clearly been made in calling them species. As regards the Bovidae, Professor Gates is in error. The family includes all the cattle, sheep, and antelopes, and most of these do not cross at all. Even among the cattle, male hybrids are often sterile and sometimes rare.

As regards interbreeding, different species and sub-species of animals, even if capable of unrestricted fertility, do not normally cross with each other, or do so only on the margins of their ranges. The different groups of man, on the other hand, whatever you may choose to call them, do normally cross with each other, providing a totally different type of biological result.

In more general terms, the evolution of higher animals seems to have been overwhelmingly of the *divergent* type, in which groups diverge from each other after geographical or physiological isolation, until they first do not and later cannot interbreed. In man, however, at any rate since long before the dawn of history, evolution has been what may be called *reticulate*, in which the convergence of distinct lines is as important as divergence, and segregative recombination therefore produces a very large range of variability.

In spite of Professor Gates's remarks, I regard this distinction as of great biological importance, and fail to see any grounds for considering the "races of mankind" as species. In any case these races are hypothetical at the present day, and even were we to call them species, there would be no agreement as to their number or delimitation.

Finally, I wish to protest strongly against Professor Gates's description of the attitude of myself and Dr. Haddon as "propagandist." *We Europeans* was a scientific attempt to survey the problems of human ethnology in the light of modern genetics. If unscientific motives are to be ascribed to those whose scientific conclusions differ from our own, it will be a bad day for British science.